

RISE OF THE MIDNIGHT SONS DARKHOLD

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Part 4
of 6



For eons, the walls between our earth and the supernatural realms have held fast ... until now. Now those walls are weakening, and LILITH, Queen of Evil, Mother of Demons, has risen from her slumber to shatter the walls and free her hellish spawn. Only the strangest of alliances can drive her back ... a union of old enemies and new heroes, in a battle forever to be remembered as the ...

RISE OF THE MIDNIGHT SONS™

DARKHOLD #1 PART 4

Writer: CHRISTIAN COOPER
Penciler: RICHARD CASE
Inker: MARK MCKENNA
Colorist: GLYNIS OLIVER
Letterer: PHIL FELIX
Editor: BOBBIE CHASE
Managing Editor: KELLY CORVESE
Editor In Chief: TOM DEFALCO

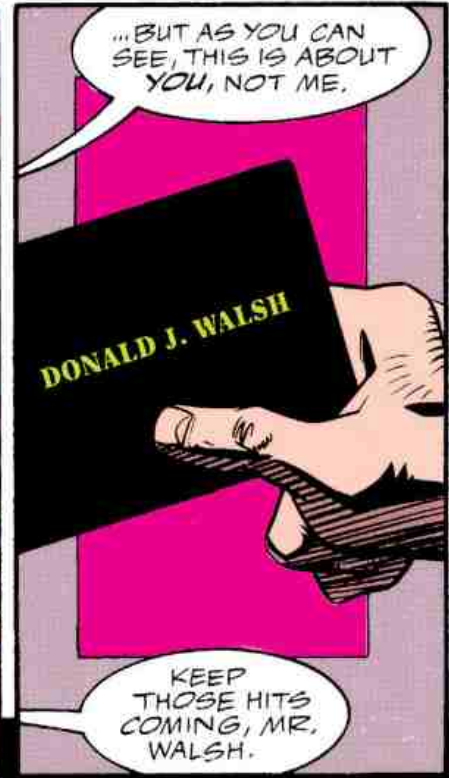
GHOST RIDER #28 Part 1
SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #1 Part 2
MORBIUS #1 Part 3
NIGHTSTALKERS #1 Part 5
GHOST RIDER #31 Part 6

YOU REALLY
OUGHT TO TAKE
A LOOK AT
WHAT'S INSIDE.
YOU'RE GONNA
LOVE IT.

AW, C'MON.
YOU KNOW
YOU'RE
DYING TO
OPEN IT.

TRUST
ME, YOU'RE
GONNA
LOVE THIS
STUFF.

BLACK LETTER







"VICKI?"

"YO! EARTH TO VICKI MONTESI!"



ROME.

I'VE HEARD OF SPACING OUT, VICKI, BUT IN MID-SENTENCE...?

SORRY. GUESS I'M NOT FEELING SO WELL.



NASH, DON'T YOU THINK SPAGHETTI LOOKS KIND OF...Y'KNOW, GROSS?



NO. STOP CHANGING THE SUBJECT.

YOU'VE BEEN ZONING OUT A LOT LATELY.

WELL... I HAVEN'T BEEN GETTING MUCH SLEEP.

NO KIDDING. YOU'RE A SLAVE TO THAT HOSPITAL. I HARDLY SEE YOU AT HOME ANYMORE.



THE FIRST YEAR OUT OF MED SCHOOL'S THE ROUGHEST.



BUT I DIDN'T KNOW YOU CARED.

OH! I'M CUT! I BLEED! I MUST HIE ME TO THE LADIES' ROOM TO TEND MY WOUND!



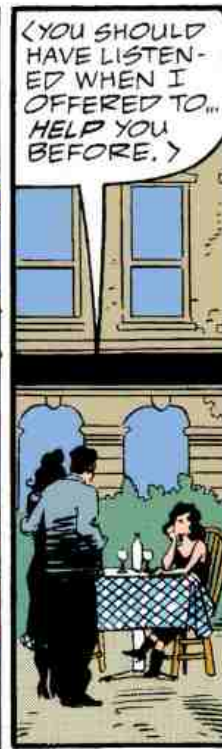
RIGHT. TEND TO YOUR BLADDER, MORE LIKE.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME? THESE MENTAL LAPSES ARE GETTING SCARY. MAYBE I SHOULD--

AW, CRUD.

< WELL, WELL, WELL. IF IT ISN'T THE LITTLE MONGREL! >*

* TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

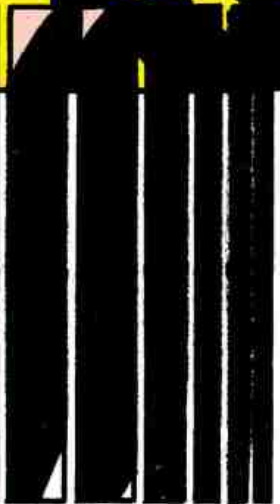




BOOM!!

NASH!

UUNNNNNNNNGH



WHERE AM I?

WHO--?

PLEASE...



YOU MUST UNDERSTAND...



I ONLY WANT TO TOUCH YOU ... KNOW YOUR WARM, LIVING FLESH ...



KEEP AWAY!



NO!

EASY, VICKI.
IT'S DR. DIFINIZIO.
THERE WAS A
BOMB BLAST...

... BUT YOU'RE SAFE
NOW, IN ST. ANTHONY'S
HOSPITAL. YOU'VE BEEN
OUT FOR THREE
DAYS ...



...THIS IS
FATHER
VITTORIO,
FROM THE
VATICAN--
OUT OF CLERI-
CAL GARBS AT
THE MOMENT--

I KNOW WHO HE IS, LOREN-
ZO. IS HE HERE TO GIVE ME
LAST RITES ?

HARDLY.
BESIDES SOME
MINOR HEAD
TRAUMA, YOU'RE
FINE.

GOOD.
THEN GET
HIM OUT
OF HERE.



VICKI ...

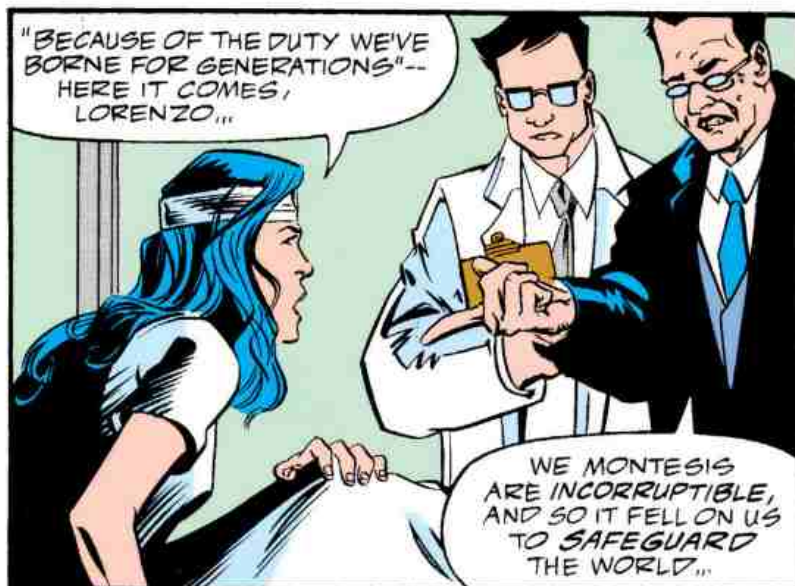
YOU DON'T GET IT, LOREN-
ZO. FATHER VITTORIO IS
MY FATHER. LITERALLY.

OH, HE'LL SPOUT SOME
MUMBO-JUMBO ABOUT
SPECIAL RULES THAT LET
PRIESTS IN OUR FAMILY
MARRY. MY MOM BOUGHT
IT ... I DON'T.

YOU SHOULD. OUR
FAMILY'S SPECIAL STATUS
IS WHY EVIL FORCES HAVE
TARGETTED YOU. FOR
AFTER I'M GONE, YOU
WILL BE THE LAST
MONTESI.



BUT, FATHER, WHY
WOULD SOMEONE WANT
TO DESTROY THE MONTESI ?



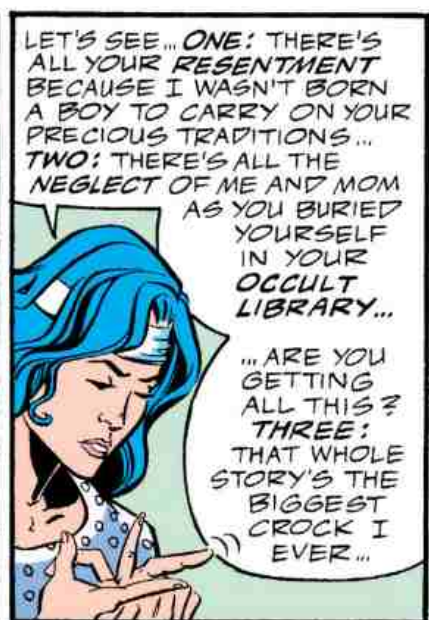
"BECAUSE OF THE DUTY WE'VE
BORNE FOR GENERATIONS"--
HERE IT COMES,
LORENZO ...

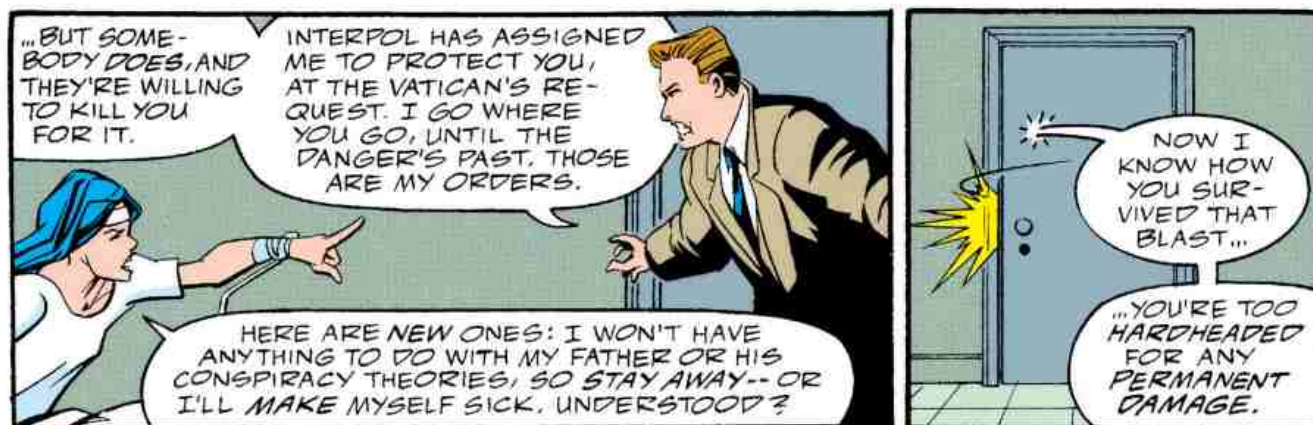
WE MONTESI
ARE INCORRUPTIBLE,
AND SO IT FELL ON US
TO SAFEGUARD
THE WORLD ...

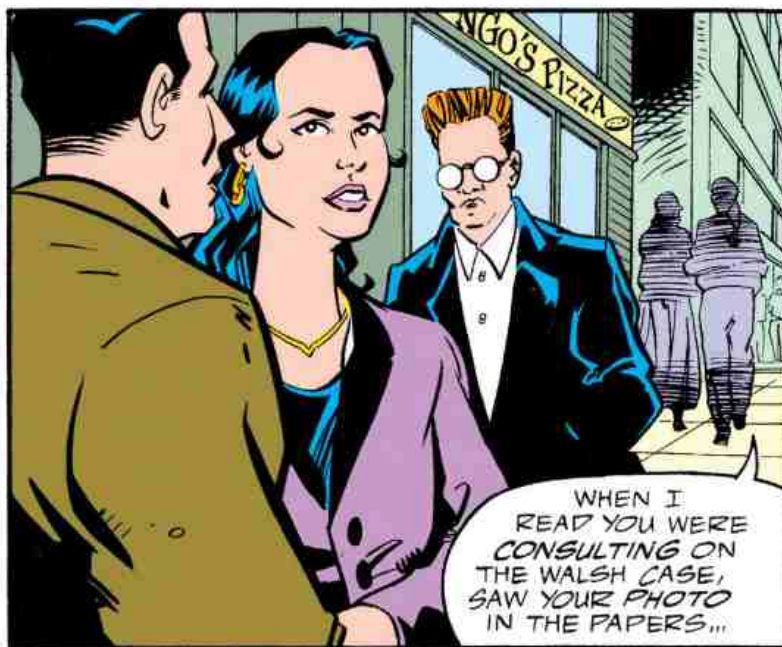
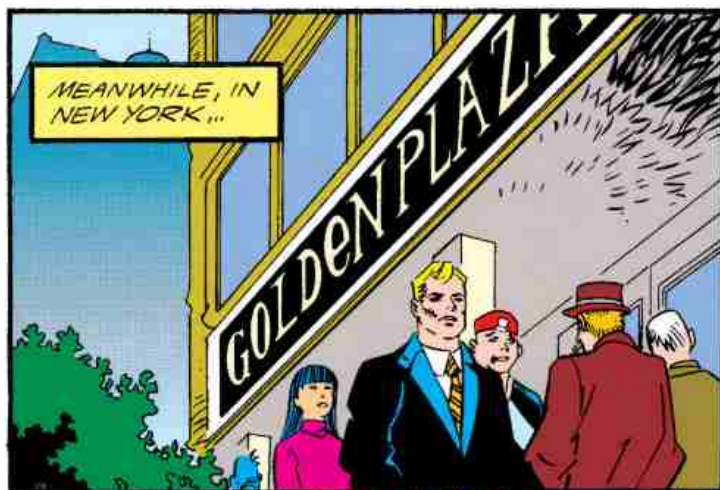


--THE
DARK-
HOLD.

MORE
MUMBO-
JUMBO.









...A WOMAN NAMED LILITH.



WE HAVE ALREADY TURNED BACK HER FORCES ONCE...

I DO NOT KNOW THIS "ZARATHOS." I AM CALLED THE GHOST RIDER.

YOUR FACE, AND THOSE OF OTHERS WE HAVE YET TO FIND, WERE REVEALED TO ME IN A VISION.

THE VISION WARNED OF A WOMAN WHO WILL OVER-RUN THE WORLD WITH HER DEMONIC CHILDREN...

WE THINK YOU AND CERTAIN OTHERS MAY BE HER NEXT TARGETS. IF SO...





THAT STUFFED BEAR WON'T FOOL THE NURSES FOR LONG...

...BUT I HAD TO GET OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. EVER SINCE MY HEAD INJURY, IMAGES HAVE CRAMMED MY MIND, FORCING ME TO SEEK OUT... WHAT? WHERE?

AND WHY DO I HAVE THE FEELING I'M BEING FOLLOWED?

LISTEN TO ME. MY FATHER REALLY HAS ME SPOOKED.

WHEREVER I'M GOING, I'LL NEED MONEY. MY CREDIT CARDS WERE TRASHED IN THE BLAST...

I'LL TRY SOFIA. SHE'S ALWAYS GOT LIRA TO SPARE.

BREEP
BREEP
BREEP

C'MON, SOFE, ANSWER THE... PHONE...

SKRASH!

NO!

THINK FAST, MONTESI!

WHAK

I DID IT! I'M SAFE!



BUCHANAN!
BUT HOW--?

BEEN TAILING
YOU SINCE THE
HOSPITAL.

MIND TELLING
ME WHO THESE
GOONS ARE?

THEY MUST BE DARKHOLDERS--
A SECRET CULT RUN BY POWER
SEEKERS WHO WORSHIP THAT BOOK.
MY FATHER ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT
THEM, BUT I NEVER BELIEVED--



BELIEVE IT.
I'M SORRY,
MS. MONTESI--



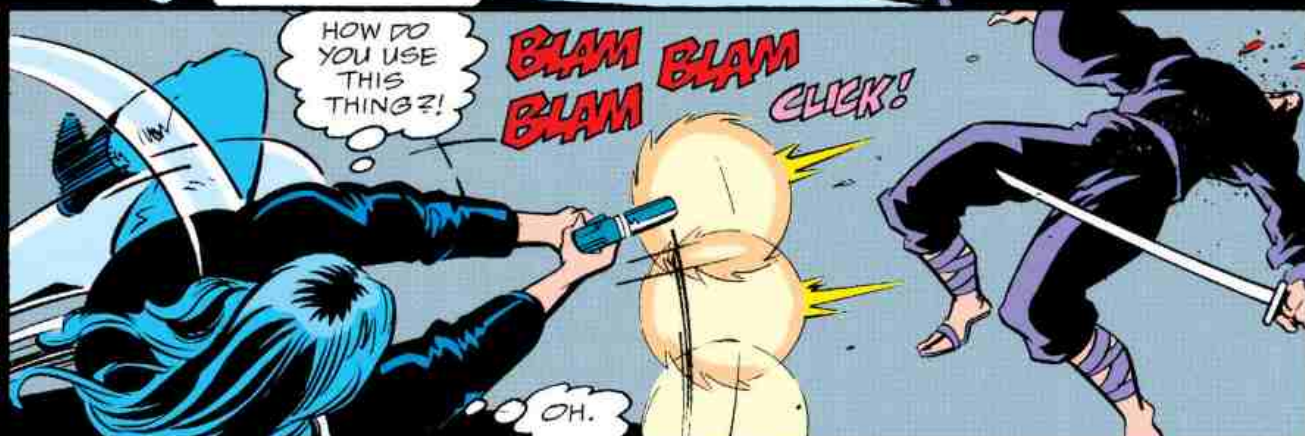
--BUT
I'M NO
FOOL.
I KNOW
THE
ODDS.

IT'S THE
WOMAN YOU
WANT, RIGHT?
SO TAKE HER.

WHAT?!

I CAN'T STOP THEM.
I'M NOT GOING TO
DIE TRYING.







NICE MOVE.

LEARNED IT FROM A FRIEND.

WE'D BETTER GET TO AN EMBASSY. LOCAL POLICE MAY BE COMPROMISED.

WHAT?! THEY JUST TRIED TO KILL YOU!

I'M A DOCTOR. THEY MAY BE THE VERY ONES WHO BLEW UP NASH, BUT I'M STILL OBLIGATED TO HELP THEM.

I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA. WE'RE GOING TO... NEW YORK-- AFTER I HELP THESE VERMIN.

MONTESI, WE'VE GOT TO MOVE. THERE COULD BE MORE ASSASSINS.

BESIDES, THE AUTHORITIES WILL BE HERE SOON. THEY'LL SEE TO THE INJURED. WE'RE GOING TO AN EMBASSY NOW.

NO. NEW YORK.

THERE'S NO TIME FOR THIS!

LOOK, I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT, I JUST KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS ARE IN NEW YORK. BESIDES, WHO'LL LOOK FOR US THERE?

AND WHAT SAFER PLACE IN ROME THAN AN AIRPORT, WITH ITS HIGH SECURITY?

MAYBE...

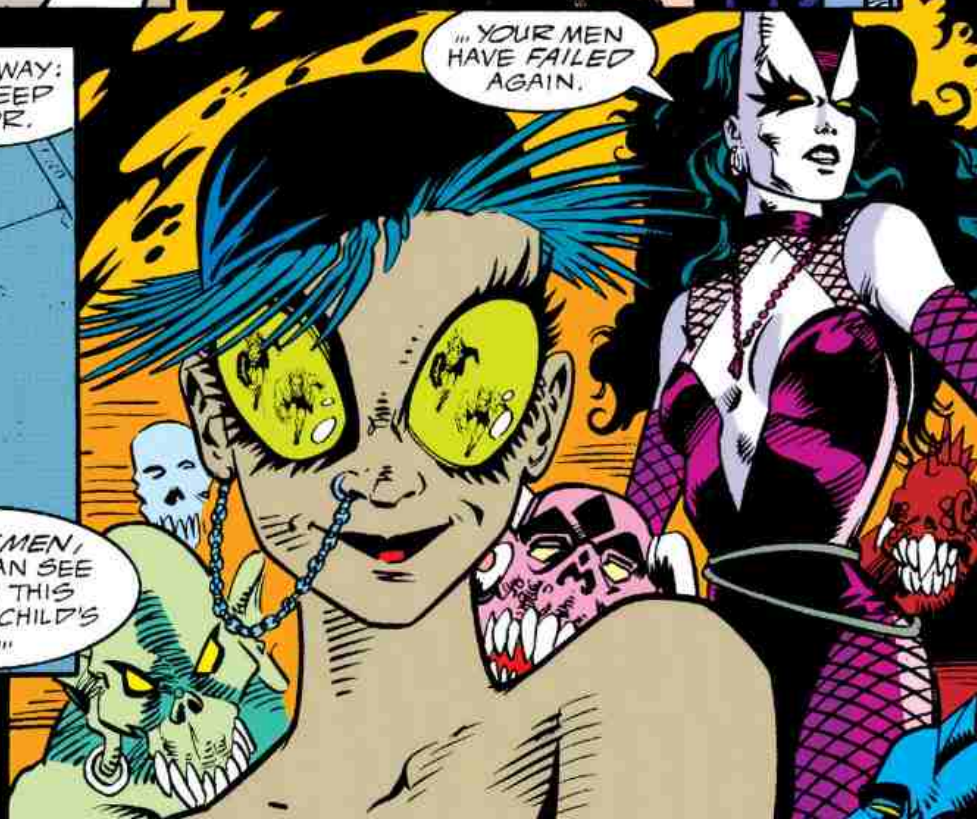


LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY: NEW YORK, OR I KEEP PLAYING DOCTOR.

NEW YORK IT IS.

GENTLEMEN, AS YOU CAN SEE THROUGH THIS GIFTED CHILD'S EYES...

...YOUR MEN HAVE FAILED AGAIN.



AND WHAT INTEREST OF YOURS, LILITH, WHETHER THE GIRL LIVES OR DIES?

SHE THREATENS THE DARKHOLD...

...THE BOOK THAT CAN RETURN CHTHON'S CHILDREN FROM EXILE...

I DON'T TRUST HER!

SILENCE! MY MASK PRESIDES!

AND WE DARKHOLDERS HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE FROM A TEMPORARY ALLIANCE.

THESE MEN ARE NOW YOURS.

BUT WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THEM THAT WE HAVEN'T?

RE-SHAPE THEM.

TAKE THEM, DOC!

BUT REALLY, MY CHILD-- TRY NOT TO MAKE SUCH A MESS THIS TIME.

...THAT I MAY LOVE THEM AS MY OWN!

THEY'LL BE FASTER, STRONGER. AND ONCE THEY'VE KILLED MONTESI...

...WE'LL SEE WHAT PLANS I HAVE FOR THIS LITTLE CULT.

AAIEEE!

LONG ISLAND.

THIS IS IN-SANE. WE TRAVEL HALFWAY 'ROUND THE WORLD TO NEW YORK, TREK OUT TO THE SUBURBS--

WALSH

--TO A CRIME SCENE? ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS INSTINCT OF YOURS?

NO. BUT I HAVE TO SEE THIS THROUGH.

HOLD IT. THIS PADLOCK'S ALREADY OPEN, AND THE TAPE'S BEEN BROKEN.

CRIME SCENE

SOMEONE'S HERE.

WE'LL GO IN THE BACK...

AND KEEP IT QUIET...







FREEZE, LADY!

SEE HERE, YOU BLOODY COWBOY...

VICKI?

LOUISE!

YOU'RE ALIVE! WHEN I HEARD ABOUT THE BLAST... BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO ASK YOU.

YOU KNOW HER, EH?

HOW CONVENIENT THAT SHE JUST HAPPENS TO BE HERE.

AGENT BUCHANAN, MEET LOUISE HASTINGS-- PROFESSOR OF ARCHAEOLOGY AT OXFORD, OCCULT EXPERT...

...AND THE ONLY FRIEND OF MY FATHER'S I EVER LOVED.

ACTUALLY, THE POLICE FLEW ME HERE TO HELP WITH THE CASE...

...WHEN THEY FOUND THIS ANCIENT PARCHMENT AT THE MURDER SITE!

WHAT IS IT?

THE GREATEST FIND OF THE CENTURY--A PAGE OF THE DARKHOLD!

WHATEVER BROUGHT YOU HERE, IT CAN'T BE COINCIDENCE. YOU'RE A MONTESI, AND THAT MAKES ME CERTAIN--

IN A BLACK ENVELOPE.

--THIS IS ONE OF THE FABLED LOST PAGES OF THE BOOK OF SINS!

OH NO, NOT AGAIN. I'LL DO MY SLEUTHING IN THE REAL WORLD, THANK YOU.

AS I WAS SAYING... THIS IS OF VAST SIGNIFICANCE. THERE ARE LEGENDS ABOUT THE DARKHOLD IN EVERY CULTURE...

--SO HIS--ITS--POWER WOULD ENDURE AND ONE DAY SUMMON IT HOME FROM EXILE.

MY FATHER NEVER MENTIONED THAT PART...

...IT DOESN'T SQUARE WITH CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

...ABOUT HOW IT WAS AUTHORED BY CHTHON--A FOUL, INCOMPREHENSIBLE BEING, GREATEST OF THE ELDER GODS--

BUT THEN, MY FATHER ALWAYS SAID THE BOOK IS CURRENTLY IN THE COLLECTION OF A MR. WEIRD--

STRANGE-- AND HE CLAIMS TO BE A DOCTOR, THOUGH FROM WHAT I'VE READ, HE'S JUST A CRACKPOT. HE'S GOT THE BOOK...

...BUT IN MEDIEVAL DAYS, THE PAGES WERE SCATTERED TO BREAK THE BOOK'S POWER. LATER, MOST WERE RE-COLLECTED, BUT SOME REMAINED LOST...

...UNTIL NOW.

I'VE TRANSLATED THIS PAGE...

PLOP!

...IT DESCRIBES A SPELL FOR IMMORTALITY...

...BUT AS A SWARM OF WORMS!



PLEASE,
HELP
ME.



MAKE
ME FEEL
ALIVE!



BLAM!

MMMPH!

BUCHANAN!



AND
YOU--
Ohhhh.

oooh.

UNIQUE,
I MUST
HAVE
MORE...



...WHEN
I'M
DONE
HERE,



HONESTLY,
OLD WOMAN.

DID YOU
THINK THE
LIGHTS
WOULD
HURT
ME?

NO--









"I LIVED LIFE AT 120 M.P.H..."



"IT TAKES ITS TOLL."



"COULDN'T READ A WORD OF WHAT WAS INSIDE, AND YET..."





"GOD KNOWS WHAT I SAID."

"NO. NOT GOD."

"A VISION ROSE FROM THE PAGE..."

"CALLED ITSELF 'THE OTHER'..."



"...OFFERED ME IMMORTALITY. I ACCEPTED..."

"...NOT KNOWING I'D SPEND ETERNITY..."

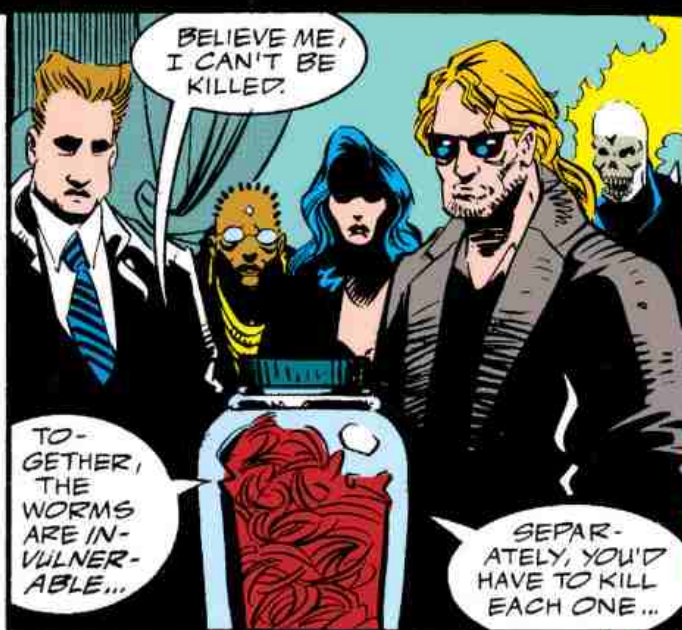
"...AS A ROTTING PILE OF WORMS PASSING FOR HUMAN."



"ME, A GLUTTON FOR LIFE, DOOMED TO FEEL DECAY..."



"...EXCEPT WHEN TASTING THE LIVING WARMTH OF OTHERS."



"BELIEVE ME, I CAN'T BE KILLED."

"TO-GETHER, THE WORMS ARE INVULNERABLE..."

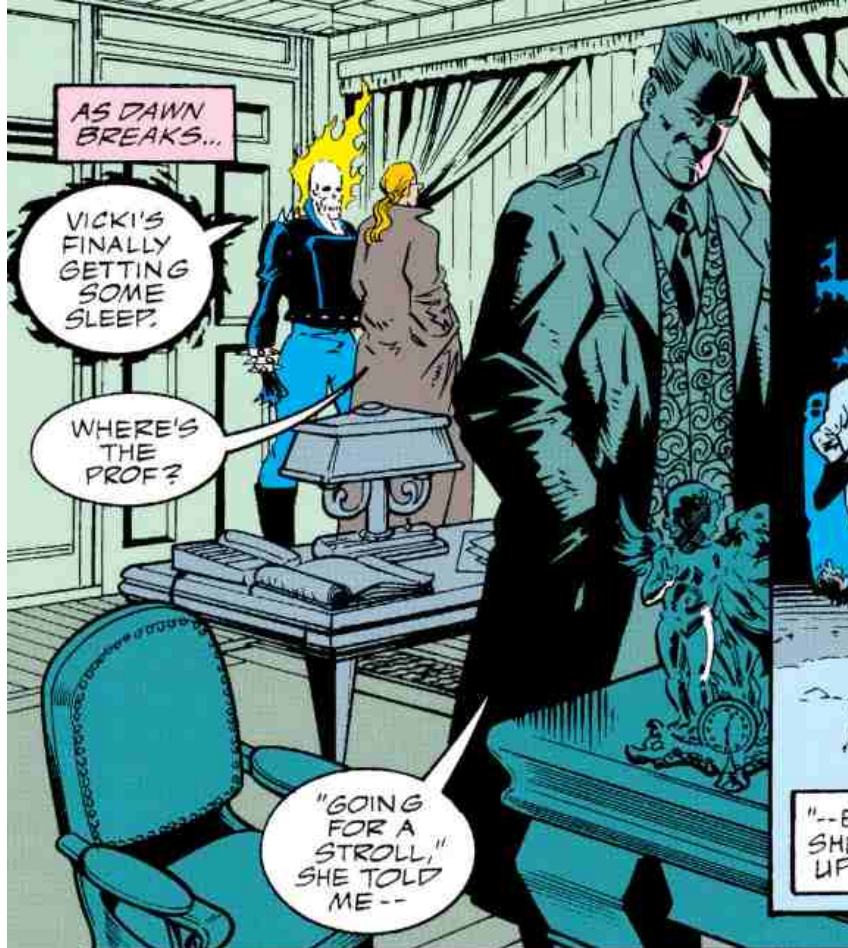
"SEPARATELY, YOU'D HAVE TO KILL EACH ONE..."



"IF EVEN ONE SURVIVED..."

"THESE CHAMELEON WORMS ARE A STROKE OF LUCK. THEY KEEP OUR TARGETS SO BUSY..."

"...WHEN WE STRIKE, THEY'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT THEM!"



AS DAWN
BREAKS...

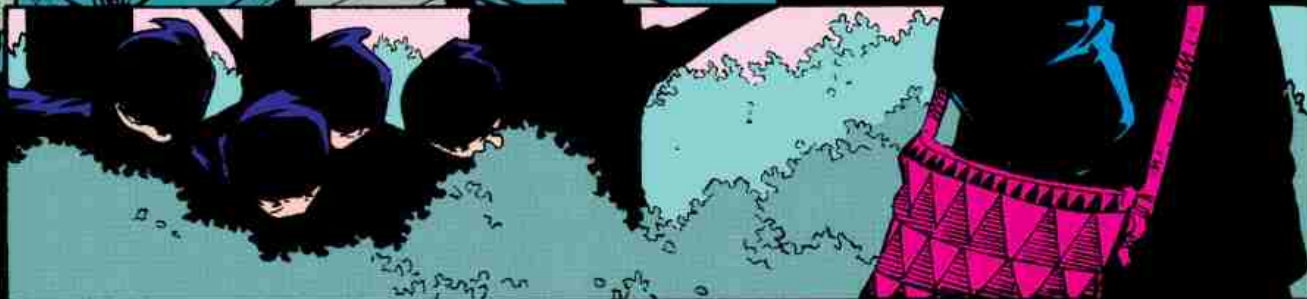
VICKI'S
FINALLY
GETTING
SOME
SLEEP.

WHERE'S
THE
PROF?

"GOING
FOR A
STROLL,"
SHE TOLD
ME --



"--BUT WHAT'S
SHE REALLY
UP TO?"



GOT
IT!



BACK TO THE
HOTEL QUICK!
OLD GIRL --



--AND
PUT THE
PLAN
INTO
MOTION!









I'VE GOT A CLEAR SHOT--



NO, SAM-- NO SHOT AT ALL!

I KNEW IT! YOU--

JUST SHUT UP, WATCH-- AND PRAY.



RUN, VICKI! KEEP GOING!



HOW CAN THIS BE? THEY STAND BEFORE MY STRONGEST BLOWS!

BRACK



TELL ME ABOUT IT!





WUNGH!

YES!
SHE'S
OURS!



I TOLD
YOU I'D
HAVE YOU,
WOMAN!



BUT
NOW--



WE'LL HAVE
TWO TIMES
THE FUN!



NOT
HUMAN? THEN
I'LL HOLD
BACK NO
LONGER!



TOO
LATE,
FALSE
DEMON!

TOO
LATE!



"THE BIRDS!"

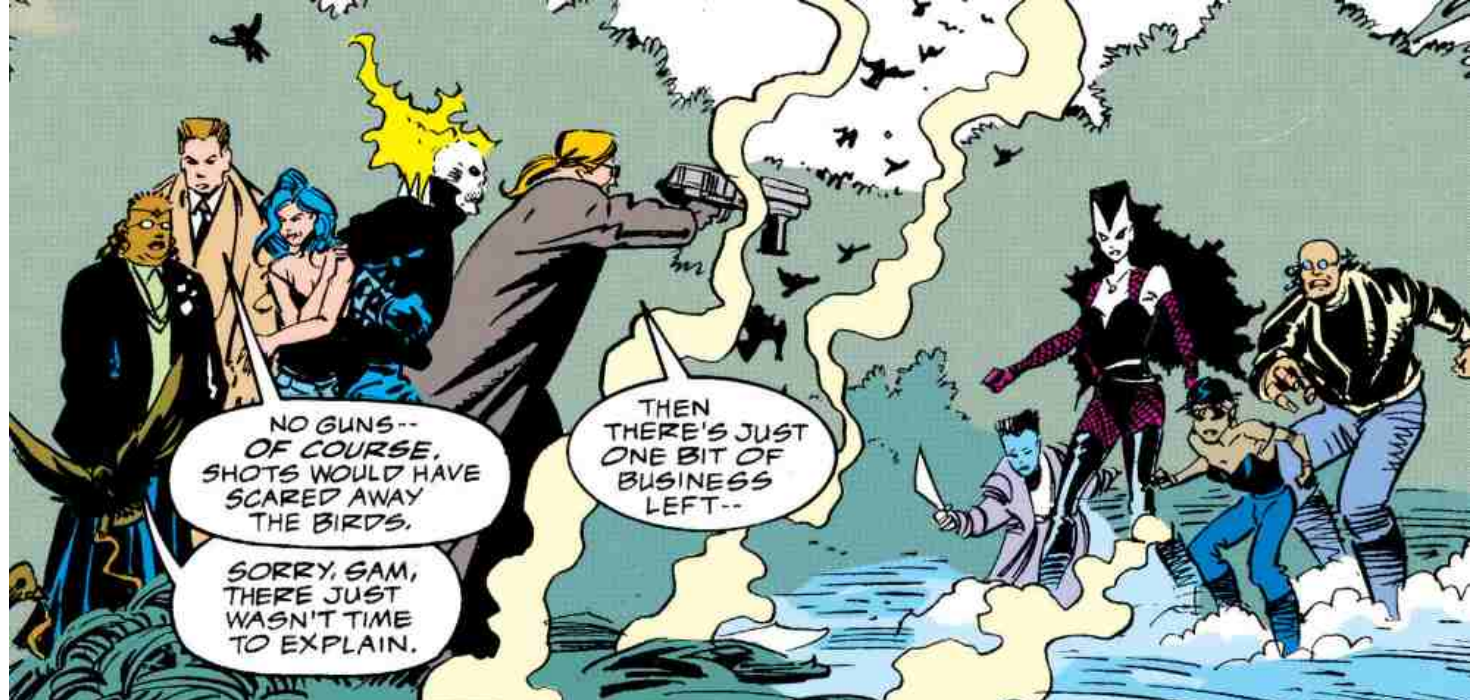


WAIT--LOOK!
THE BIRDS!

NO!
STOP
THEM!

DON'T
LET
THEM--





NO GUNS--
OF COURSE,
SHOTS WOULD HAVE
SCARED AWAY
THE BIRDS.

SORRY, SAM,
THERE JUST
WASN'T TIME
TO EXPLAIN.

THEN
THERE'S JUST
ONE BIT OF
BUSINESS
LEFT--



MOTHER--
LOOK OUT!

AAAAIEEEEE!

YOU, BLAZE, AND YOU,
GHOST RIDER-- AND
YOU SELF-APPOINTED
DARKHOLD RE-
DEEMERS-- YOU'LL
ALL PAY--!

NOT JUST WITH YOUR
LIVES--
--BUT WITH YOUR
VERY
SOULS!

WAIT
FOR...

...MEEEEE!



UH-
OH.



SHE WON'T GET FAR.

FOR NOW, AT LEAST, THE THREAT TO YOU FROM LILITH IS PAST.

STILL, YOU AND BLAZE MUST CONTINUE TO FIGHT HER--

--WHILE I FIGHT THE DARKHOLD.

BUT WITH WALSH GONE, THAT DANGER'S OVER!

THAT PARTICULAR MENACE IS GONE--BUT IF THAT DARKHOLD PAGE TURNED UP AFTER ALL THOSE CENTURIES, WHY NOT OTHERS?

ONE HAS. I HAD ANOTHER VISION WHILE I SLEPT.

YOU'RE NOT GOING AFTER THEM ALONE-- I'M PROTECTING YOU, REMEMBER?

AND I WOULDN'T MISS THIS CHANCE FOR FIRSTHAND OCCULT RESEARCH FOR THE WORLD!

OH, PLEASE-- CAN WE DROP THIS HOCUS-POCUS STUFF?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND THESE HORRORS--I'M STILL NOT SURE I BELIEVE IN THEM--BUT I KNOW I'VE GOT TO STOP THEM.



THEY HAVEN'T NOTICED ME! I'M FREE! FREEEEEEEE--



FIE...

...I REALLY MUST WATCH WHERE I STEP.

SPLORSH!



MORE IMPORTANTLY, I MUST WATCH THIS MONTESI...

...VERY CLOSELY, ME-THINKS!

ELSEWHERE...

BLAST!
THESE
THINGS
NEVER WORK
WHEN YOU
NEED 'EM!

CLICK
FZZ
CLICK
FZZ
CLICK
FZZ

ALLOW
ME...

CLICK...
FWOOSH!

UH... YOU'RE
MY PAROLE
OFFICER,
RIGHT?

NOT
QUITE...

BUT I DO
HAVE SOME-
THING THAT
COULD TAKE
YOUR CAREER
IN A WHOLE
NEW DIR-
ECTION...

THE MIDNIGHT SONS SAGA
CONTINUES NEXT MONTH IN
THE PREMIERE OF THE LAST
NEW BOOK: DON'T MISS

NIGHTSTALKERS

CAUTION:

KEROSENE

TO BE
CONTINUED...